

fused break-up concerns that we worry for BARR because it's too scary to worry about our own such situations. Lead single "Song Is the Single" is a song and I already made this joke in the Singles section, but it's such a catchy ditty that I had to touch on it again: a rolling, lo-fi bass riff and BARR at his most funny and, gasp, pop. This LA-based artist's shows are part stand-up comedy disaster filled with rambling asides and part one-man show—the kind of thing that we want our funniest friends to do.

Brandon Perkins



BROTHER ALI **The Undisputed Truth**

★★★★

Slug's long-time opening act acts out

(Rhymesayers) In the early '00s, Brother Ali was the chubby albino Rhymesayer whose insane-good boast-raps didn't sync up with his "thugged-out nerd" exterior. But that intriguing contrast paired with his incredibly forthcoming delivery drew people to root for the underdog. Now, the Minneapolis resident's sophomore collaboration with producer Ant makes one thing clear: Ali's not the underdog anymore (underdogs don't go

on tour as Rakim's opening act). If his first album, *Shadows on the Sun*—one of 2003's best hip-hop releases—was meant to introduce Ali to his would-be fanbase, *The Undisputed Truth*—which sees Ali's life taking a total 180—seals the damn deal. On standout cut "Lookin' at Me Sideways," Ali embraces his new success with that untouchable, vulnerable confidence: "I ain't even here to get clandestine but/Best believe I'mma get what's destined/Be it an Escalade or a fixed-up F10, it's better than this bus, best friend/Belieeedat!" Destiny will surely bring dude more than a vehicle, but we doubt he'll give up the bus. **Jen Boyles**



CALLA **Strength in Numbers**

★★★

How to get loud: Try quiet

(Beggars Banquet) At their hardest, Calla is an ear-throbbing Muse ("Sanctify"). At their most tender, Calla is a melancholic Elliott Smith ("Sleep in Splendor"). But what gives the group's fifth record, *Strength in Numbers*—the follow-up to their Beggars Banquet debut, 2005's *Collisions*—the sound of a band landing its proper second stride is the hiss and grind that churns docile com-